If thus assimilation is not the voluntary act of the individual, but a social mass phenomenon of almost inherent necessity, it cannot be judged by the rules of individual morality and described as disloyalty or opportunism, nor can it be counteracted by argument. Whenever the Jews of the Diaspora were not confined to the ghetto, but were able to mix freely with culturally higher neighbours, they always tried to adapt themselves to these. In the strata of Jewish society particularly exposed to external influences assimilation often resulted even in the abandonment of Jewish religion. Thus assimilation is not a new phenomenon, except that to-day the external influences are stronger than ever before, and that assimilation has penetrated from the periphery right into the centre.

(2) DECLINE OF THE JEWISH RELIGION

The influence of Jewish religion on the life of the Jews is now incomparably weaker than in former times. [c] 'Enlightenment", beginning in France in the second half of the eighteenth century, spread to the educated classes of the rest of Europe. It affected the Jews of the large cities, more especially of Berlin, which became for them the centre of a new education and where many believed themselves bound to complete their entry into European civilization by con-

version to Christianity.

Not everywhere was the impact of enlightenment as strong as among the Jews of Berlin, and it took usually three or four generations to make the Jews give up their religion entirely. The process was gradual, leading from the old Jewish orthodoxy to a more lax observance of ritual in the first generation, to the elimination of religion from daily life and its relegation to Sabbath and Feast Days in the second, to religious indifference remembering only the High Holidays in the third generation, in which, however,